

LeFevour: What about the sacraments? In what way would the sacraments be involved in the concept of non-dogmatic interpretation you just explained?

Downey: Well the Orthodox explanation of a sacrament is a pretty good interpretation, even from a metaphysical or philosophical or Theosophical approach. And that definition from the old catechism is that “a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.” So we see the sacraments as channels or conduits through which grace or spiritual energy, if you want to put it in those terms, is made available. The church is given the express privilege, responsibility, and challenge to try to maintain the integrity of those sacraments. We are keeping those channels open and awake and valid as interpreted historically so that ideally we can bring more light into a relatively dark world.

LeFevour: The way you explain it sounds very similar to the purpose of many different faiths’ spiritual practices. Is that accurate to what you are saying?

Downey: It is indeed. And if you look at the sacraments, and how they are “performed”, if we use that term, it really engages all aspects of the participants, both the celebrants as well as the laity. It puts together rhythm, beauty, the use of physical actions, the use of certain implements and tools, like lights and bells and incense and wine and water and fire and earth and all the elements. It really is in many ways very much akin to ceremonial magic. Although we typically avoid the word “magic” with its implications, it actually appears in some of our literature. Even in the baptismal ceremony we say “I lay the spell of Christ’s church upon this child” so in a sense we actually use that term.

LeFevour: When you use the word “Christ” what do you mean?

Downey: That is really a personal thing. The church speaks of Christ historically as Christ, but many of our members who have a Theosophical orientation make a distinction between the cosmic Christ, the second person of the blessed trinity, and the man Jesus, the prophet Jesus. Others in our church believe that Jesus Christ was the incarnate son of God, but my own personal belief is that we are all incarnate sons of God in potential, and that the Christ, as I perceive it, is that second aspect of the threefold nature of God which is beyond space and time.

But again we have a full gamut of beliefs where Christ is concerned, and what